

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method for operating a shopper information system, the method comprising:  
2 generating an image of a shopper;  
3 distributing the image to a plurality of participants; and  
4 receiving responses to the image from the plurality of participants.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 processing the received responses.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the processing step includes performing a  
2 statistical analysis of the received responses.
- 1 4. The method of claim 2, wherein the providing step includes transmitting the  
2 processed responses to the shopper.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 selecting a garment to be included in the image.
- 1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the shopper dons the selected garment.
- 1 7. The method of claim 5, wherein an image of the selected garment is combined  
2 with an image of the shopper.
- 1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the generating step includes using an optical  
2 system to capture an image of the shopper.
- 1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the optical system is part of a digital camera.
- 1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 receiving input from the shopper to define characteristics of the participants; and  
3 assembling the participants based on the received input.
- 1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein the characteristics of the participants include  
2 demographic characteristics of the participants.

- 1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein the characteristics of the participants include  
2 subjective characteristics defined by the participants.
- 1 13. The method of claim 10, wherein the assembling step includes selecting a panel of  
2 participants from a pool of participants.
- 1 14. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 providing the received responses to the shopper substantially immediately upon  
3 receiving the responses.
- 1 15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 accumulating the responses.
- 1 16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:  
2 presenting the accumulated responses to the shopper.
- 1 17. The method of claim 16, wherein the presenting step includes transmitting the  
2 accumulated responses to a shopper terminal.
- 1 18. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 generating a question to be distributed to the participants together with the image.
- 1 19. The method of claim 18, wherein the responses include a selection of one of two  
2 alternatives posed by the question.
- 1 20. The method of claim 18, wherein the responses include a selection of one of a  
2 range of alternatives posed by the question.
- 1 21. The method of claim 18, wherein the responses include open-ended text responses  
2 to the question.
- 1 22. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 transmitting a promotional offer to the shopper together with the received  
3 responses.

1 23. The method of claim 22, wherein the promotional offer is determined based on an  
2 analysis of the received responses.

1 24. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 transmitting the received responses to a retailer.

1 25. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 applying a rating to at least some of the participants on the basis of the received  
3 responses.

1 26. The method of claim 25, further comprising:  
2 providing a benefit to at least some of the participants on the basis of the applied  
3 rating.

1 27. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 providing an offer to the participants together with the distributed image.

1 28. A method for operating a shopper information network, the method comprising:  
2 logging on to a shopping website;  
3 retrieving a shopper image that represents a shopper;  
4 selecting a garment;  
5 combining an image of the selected garment with the shopper image to form a  
6 combined image;  
7 requesting a panel of participants;  
8 defining desired characteristics of the panel of participants;  
9 determining availability of participants who match the defined desired  
10 characteristics;  
11 transmitting the combined image to participants determined to be available;  
12 receiving responses from participants to whom the combined image was  
13 transmitted;  
14 processing the received responses; and  
15 transmitting the processed responses to the shopper.

1 29. The method of claim 28, wherein the processing step includes calculating  
2 respective percentages for categories of the received responses, and wherein the calculated  
3 percentages are presented to the shopper.

1 30. The method of claim 28, wherein the received responses include open-ended text  
2 responses.

1 31. The method of claim 28, further comprising:  
2 defining a query and transmitting the query to the participants with the combined  
3 image.

1 32. The method of claim 31, wherein the step of defining the query includes selecting  
2 the query from a menu.

1 33. The method of claim 31, wherein the step of defining the query includes entering  
2 text characters via a keyboard.

1 34. The method of claim 28, further comprising:  
2 selecting a second garment;  
3 said combined image including an image of the selected second garment.

1 35. The method of claim 28, wherein the shopper image is a virtual model that represents  
2 the shopper.

1 36. The method of claim 28, wherein the shopper image is derived from at least one  
2 photograph of the shopper.

1 37. A method of operating a shopper information system, the method comprising:  
2 capturing an image of a shopper who is wearing a garment;  
3 defining a panel of participants;  
4 transmitting the image to the panel of participants;  
5 receiving responses from the participants; and  
6 presenting the responses to the shopper.

1 38. The method of claim 37, wherein the responses are presented to the shopper in the  
2 form of a statistical analysis of the responses.

1 39. The method of claim 38, wherein the responses are divided into categories and the  
2 statistical analysis includes percentages that correspond to the categories.

1 40. The method of claim 37, further comprising:  
2 entering a product identifier code for the garment.

1 41. The method of claim 40, wherein the entering step includes scanning a bar code  
2 that represents the product identifier code.

1 42. The method of claim 37, further comprising:  
2 entering a query and transmitting the query to the panel of participants with the  
3 image.

1 43. The method of claim 37, wherein the presenting step is performed substantially  
2 immediately after the receiving step.

1 44. A shopper information system, comprising:  
2 a processor; and  
3 a memory connected to the processor and storing a program;  
4 the processor being operative with the program to:  
5 store an image of a shopper;  
6 distribute the image to a plurality of participants; and  
7 receive responses to the image from the plurality of participants.

1 45. A shopper information kiosk, comprising:  
2 a kiosk structure;  
3 image means, mounted on the kiosk structure, for converting an image to digital  
4 image data;  
5 a memory for storing the digital image data;  
6 a processor connected to the memory;  
7 communication means for connecting the processor to a data network;

8 input means for providing shopper input to the processor; and  
9 a display for displaying information to a shopper;  
10 the processor being programmed to:  
11 control the image means to capture an image of the shopper;  
12 distribute the captured image to a plurality of participants via the  
13 communication means; and  
14 present to the shopper via the display responses to the distributed image  
15 received from the participants.

1 46. The shopper information kiosk of claim 45, wherein the image means includes a  
2 digital camera.

1 47. The shopper information kiosk of claim 45, further comprising a scanner  
2 connected to the processor for entering garment information.

1 48. A method for operating a shopper information system, the method comprising:  
2 storing respective profiles for each participant of a pool of participants;  
3 generating an image of a shopper;  
4 receiving a request for a panel of participants, the request specifying at least one  
5 participant characteristic;  
6 selecting a panel of participants from the pool of participants based on the stored  
7 profiles and the specified at least one participant characteristic; and  
8 distributing the image of the shopper to the selected panel of participants.

1 49. The method of claim 48, further comprising:  
2 receiving responses to the image from the panel of participants.

1 50. The method of claim 49, further comprising:  
2 providing feedback to the shopper on the basis of the received responses.

1 51. The method of claim 48, wherein the generating step is performed before the  
2 receiving step.

- 1 52. The method of claim 48, wherein the receiving step is performed before the  
2 generating step.
- 1 53. The method of claim 48, further comprising:  
2 storing a profile for the shopper.
- 1 54. The method of claim 48, wherein the generating step includes using an optical  
2 system to capture an image of the shopper.
- 1 55. An article of manufacture comprising:  
2 a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means  
3 embodied therein for operating a shopper information system, the computer readable  
4 program code means in said article of manufacture comprising:  
5 computer readable program code means for storing an image of a shopper;  
6 computer readable program code means for distributing the image to a  
7 plurality of participants; and  
8 computer readable program code means for receiving responses to the image  
9 from the plurality of participants.
- 1 56. A method for using a shopper information network, the method comprising:  
2 selecting a garment;  
3 requesting a panel of participants; and  
4 receiving feedback regarding the garment based on responses from the panel  
5 of participants.
- 1 57. The method of claim 56, further comprising:  
2 defining desired characteristics of the panel of participants.
- 1 58. The method of claim 56, further comprising logging on to a shopping website.
- 1 59. The method of claim 56, further comprising:  
2 capturing an image of a shopper.
- 1 60. A method for participating in a shopper information system, the method  
2 comprising:  
3 receiving an invitation to participate in a panel;

4 responding to the invitation;  
5 receiving a message that includes an image of a shopper; and  
6 responding to the message.

1 61. The method of claim 60, wherein the step of responding to the message  
2 includes selecting a check box.

1 62. The method of claim 60, further comprising:  
2 receiving information concerning characteristics of the shopper.

1 63. A method for participating in a shopper information system, the method  
2 comprising:  
3 receiving information concerning characteristics of shoppers;  
4 using the received information to select an image for viewing; and  
5 receiving the selected image.